

INDIANA

BY SAMUEL W. TAIT, JR.

Sic Transit Libertas!

What man is there so bold that he should say,
"Thus, and thus only, would I have the sea"?

So all in vain will timorous ones essay
To set the metes and bounds of Liberty,
For Freedom is its own eternal law,
It makes its own conditions, and in storm
Or calm alike fulfills the unerring Will. . . .
Forever in thine eyes, O Liberty,
Shines that high light whereby the world is
saved,
And though thou slay us, we shall trust in thee!

THIS high-flown apostrophe is not that of an Eighteenth Century romanticist nor that of a lyrical Bolshevik out of Greenwich Village. The author, on the contrary, was none other than John Hay, LL.D., essayist, poet, diplomat; adjutant and aide-de-camp of President Lincoln; lieutenant colonel in the United States Army; secretary of the Paris and Madrid legations; chargé d'affairs at Vienna; ambassador to the Court of St. James; Secretary of State in the cabinets of McKinley and Roosevelt, and part author and negotiator of the Hay-Pauncefote and other treaties which made the Panama Canal a diplomatic possibility—in truth, one of the brightest jewels in the Hoosier diadem. He died in 1905, and hence he expressed these sentiments in the remote days when Prohibition was still only a hope in the minds of the earnest members of the W. C. T. U.

It is fortunate, indeed, that no master of the Doylian conjuration in his native State can call him back for a visitation to the scenes of his youth. For if he were visible to mortal eye, he could hardly saunter far along the shaded walks of any Indiana town without being challenged

by some agent of the new order in the State, who, recognizing him as a superior and, hence, undesirable person, would at once proceed to search him without respect to either decency or the Fourth Amendment to a forgotten Federal Constitution. What is more, the minion of official righteousness would smell the breath of the returned spirit, and if it happened to bear an odor resembling any of those beverages which, in the days of the spirit's temporal existence, were the customary indulgences of gentlemen, its possessor would forthwith be dragged before the nearest magistrate upon a charge of drunkenness. There, perhaps a further search would discover a hitherto unnoticed bottle or flask which, though empty, exuded a sinful odor; and if so, the unfortunate one would immediately be thrown into the local bastille to await indictment by the next grand jury. He would be indicted under the new Wright bone-dry law for the possession of liquor, and after many months he might get a trial. Then a judge and jury would condemn him to six months in the county jail and fine him five hundred dollars.

If the liquor had been a gift, however, and if the accused were willing to tell the name of the donor,—if, that is, he were willing to become a bounder and a cad,—he would be granted immunity. The donor, on the other hand, would be fined and jailed for the crime of hospitality. In either event, any organization of fanatics who so wished could employ an attorney to act as assistant prosecutor, and the case could not be dismissed over his objection until it had been argued by counsel and fully considered by the court. If he

secured a conviction, the regularly elected prosecutor would receive, not the usual fee that attaches to convictions for such petty crimes as larceny and arson, but the handsome amount of twenty-five dollars. It is obvious, then, that few such prisoners ever escape a jail sentence.

Such is existence in Indiana under the enlightened suzerainty of the Ku Klux Klan! It was for this divine consummation, apparently, that Benjamin Harrison went to the White House, and Hay and numberless others labored and sang, and Tarkington and Phillips wrote, and Ade fabled, and Nicholson became an essayist, and Theodore Dreiser created Caroline Meeber, and his brother Paul wrote that sweet and soothing song! Alas, no longer could Theodore, helping Paul at a difficult point, pen the lines of that moving chorus:

Oh, the moon is fair tonight along the Wabash,
From the fields there comes the breath of new-
mown hay;
Through the sycamores the candle lights are
gleaming. . . .

The once brilliant moon is now a pale and diabetic blur. The odor from the countryside is not of Alsace but of the smoking embers of some dance hall or other den of iniquity, touched off by the armies of triumphant righteousness, and the light that gleams through the stately sycamores is not from candles but from the blazing new emblem of the Imperial Commonwealth of Indiana—the Fiery Cross.

II

The Methodist Invasion

When I was a boy on the rolling plains of the Northeastern part of the State things were vastly different. In those unregenerate days another spirit suffused both communal life and practical statecraft. It was a tolerant, charitable spirit, and it left little room for religious bigotry and sadistic Puritanism. Perhaps I can best explain the attitude of the time by pointing to a figure who typified it admirably—the

late Thomas R. Marshall. He was not, even when compared with his political contemporaries, a great man. There was very little intellectual finesse in him. Reading his memoirs, one finds him viewing the United States Senate as a body of supermen. But in this failing he was representative of the charitable spirit of his fellow Hoosiers, who are similarly lacking in hypercritical sensitiveness toward each other. His other characteristics were also representative of his State—his courage, his engaging frankness, his bucolic humor, and his practical idealism. He could fraternize with the anti-Prohibitionists in the afternoon and attend a prayer meeting in the evening, and no one would think of denouncing him as inconsistent. Thus was Indiana in the first decade of the present century, before the Uplift was put on a paying basis.

The first time I realized that a radical change had occurred was when, during a hurried trip to the State just prior to the Fall elections of 1922, I was beseeched by an acquaintance to register and vote for a candidate because his opponent was a Catholic. I had long before this become conscious of the absence of many of the elements of the old grace and charm—the fiery distillations of *Terre Haute* and the Ohio River country, the mellow brews of the free town of Fort Wayne, and all the haunts of camaraderie and conviviality, of good food and its essential accompaniment. But it was not until I appreciated the full import of my acquaintance's request that I sensed what a profound alteration had taken place in the mental attitude of the people. However, when I later found myself ruminating over my former years there, I recalled many happenings which, while seemingly insignificant at the time, I now realized to have been portentous.

The first heralds of the new order were settlers who followed the Catholics into the Territory. All of them—mostly unemployed linen workers from the North of Ireland, and adventurers from the seaboard States—were devotees of some brand of

evangelical Protestantism. First came the Baptists. They were followed shortly by the Methodists and the Presbyterians. The faith of the last named was much too cool to make considerable progress in the Indiana of that day, for the taste of the frontiersman for religion was similar to his taste for liquor. It was the evangelical hell-fire of Methodism that satisfied his want perfectly, so it was to Methodism that he turned instinctively and immediately. It gave him full opportunity to shout, and it thus relieved somewhat his dreadfully drab existence.

The first circuit was established about 1807, in the southeastern corner of the State. At the end of the first year the barn-stormer who conducted it had a congregation of one hundred and sixty-five whites and one Negro. The circuits multiplied with the population, and twenty years later there were over twelve thousand communicants and one hundred and twenty-seven itinerant preachers. By 1874 Indiana had the largest number of Methodist churches of any State in the Union, with the exception of Massachusetts. In that year they had sixteen hundred Bethels, little and big, and for the preceding twenty years had averaged more than fifty new ones a year. The Church's property was estimated at nearly four million, or more than three times that of any other denomination in the State.

But the advance in wealth and converts brought to the Church none of the refinement that is usually linked with a sense of economic security. The primitive evangelism persisted; if it altered at all, it became more inflammatory. Worse, the other Protestant sects, noting the astonishing success of Methodism, gave up their dignified methods of soul saving and began to ape its idiotic but highly efficient ways. The Baptists were the first to fall in, and they were followed quickly by all the other zealous and hungry denominations, including a part of the Presbyterians. United revival meetings in mammoth lath and tarpaper tabernacles became institutional in

the villages of the Southern hill country and the tank towns of the Central and Northern plains, and even as early as 1910 it could have been said with accuracy that there was only one Protestant church in Indiana.

III

Hail, Hail Ku Kluxia!

Up to this time, however, evangelism had kept within certain limits and conducted its proselyting with comparative decency. To the intelligent and indifferent Indianan it was an amusing spectacle, but hardly a dangerous one. Such a person might go about his own affairs and live pretty much as he desired, and still be safe from molestation. What altered this completely was the increasing prosperity of the Indiana farmer. And when I say farmer I mean the typical citizen of the State, which remains, despite the gabble of the Rotarians, distinctively agricultural. The only district it has ever had which could properly be called industrial is the little territory in the Northwestern corner containing the steel towns of Hammond, Gary, Whiting and so on, and this has always been considered by most Hoosiers as a settlement of undesirable aliens belonging more to the sinful city of Chicago than to the pure Nordic Blond Commonwealth of Indiana.

The farmer of the State, for all the advantages of soil and climate, always had hard going up to about the time of the late great moral crusade in Europe. Then, almost over night, everything became rose-colored, and the dollars began to roll in at a rate for which he was quite unprepared. He spent some of it on flivvers, phonographs and player-pianos,—and his evangelism changed fundamentally with his new mode of living. It underwent, in fine, that evolution which Puritanism always undergoes with an increase in the wealth and security of its devotees. From an inward necessity it changed to an outward compulsion; it dropped all pretence of persuasion, and became undisguisedly

militant. It ceased to plead for converts. It began to devote all its resources to forcing its grotesque doctrines upon the indifferent public.

This new spirit was exhibited, first, in the pathological ferocity that got into the new vice-crusading and clean-up campaigns, and, secondly, in the enlarged activity and power of the Anti-Saloon League, an organization till then useful chiefly in securing a good living for clever shysters from the pennies and nickels of Sunday-school children. Thirdly, it showed itself in the new status of the National Horse Thief Protective Association, a voluntary body, with constabulary powers, authorized by the Legislature in 1865, in an effort to end the horse stealing of post-war days. This organization, up to the time of the Great War, had confined itself pretty closely to its original purpose, and had consequently dwindled greatly in membership with the decrease in stock and grain stealing. With the increased prosperity of the farmer, however, it got a new lease on life, and branched out into new and fairer fields. The emancipated peasants, instead of hiding behind fences and in ditches awaiting chances to pot some one suspected of filching a bag of corn or a few sheep hides, climbed into their Fords and Dodges and started spying upon the primitive necking parties of the country lanes. It finally became dangerous, in many parts of Indiana, for an unprotected person to travel the highways after sundown, and membership in the organization became equivalent to a ticket to a peep show.

But something was needed to combine these moral forces into an integrated and indomitable union, and it was the Klan that met this need to perfection. Here at last was a political weapon calculated to satisfy all the fears and hatreds that the evangelical hell-hounds had been instilling in the faithful for so long: fear of the power of Rome; hatred of the wickedness of the cities; fear of the Darwinian heresy; and hatred of the evil individualist who per-

sisted in having a private stock. Starting at Evansville, in the extreme southwestern part of Indiana, in 1921, and securing legal status by reason of the constabulary provision of the Horse Thief Act, the Klan spread North and East like a prairie fire. It became a company, it became a regiment, it became a division, it became an army. And in the vanguard of every company, of every regiment, and of every division strode the hell-hounds, scheming tactics, shouting commands, and bawling for blood.

The first election the new order entered in the State was that of the Fall of 1922, and the chief objective then was control of the country courts. The type of judges and prosecutors with which it succeeded in blessing the counties may be easily imagined. When these new apostles of justice were not using their official positions to aid their private law practices or to injure the practices of competitors, they were aiding the cause of social purification by providing the peepers and snouters of the night-robed horse thief detective associations with stacks of search warrants made out in the name of John Doe, at blank address.

Besides putting such paladins of the law in charge of the local administration of justice, the Indiana Klan, at the same time, made a venture into national politics. Albert J. Beveridge, the boy orator of the Senate of twenty-five years earlier and the only statesman Indiana has had in this century, was contending for the Senatorship against Samuel M. Ralston, ex-governor and the choice of Thomas Taggart, the boss of the State Democratic machine. Beveridge appeared to have the best prospect of success, when suddenly Ralston took advantage of an address at a Catholic school for young ladies to make certain remarks regarding the need of strict separation of church and state. The Klan leaped into the fray at once and began sending out hundreds of thousands of dodgers commending the speech, under the title "Where Courage Counts." Whether the remarks

had been calculated or not, their effect was notably fortunate for the man who made them. But it was a success that was accompanied by a failure. The wily Ralston went to the Senate, where he was the respectable vacuum that all who understood his public career expected him to be, but the Democratic Party in Indiana went into the garbage can.

IV

Public Servants All

The original organizer of the Klan in the State, a former coal dealer, commonly designated by the faithful as "the man who took gold out of the Ku Klux Klan and put God in," early found a competitor in one reputed to be an uncommonly bright ex-bartender. It was this latter impresario who conducted one of the most amusing acts in the Klan drama. He was delegated to complete the feat of making a laughing-stock of the Hon. James E. Watson, who had begun it himself by first becoming interested in the charges against Mayfield, and then deciding to vote for the Texan's confirmation as Senator, in order to truckle to Indiana Klansmen. The Senator, not suspecting an ulterior motive in the attentions of the Klan missionary, and having his eye on the vice-presidential nomination, let the ex-bartender trail him around like a lap dog. But when he got to the Cleveland Convention, he was thunderstruck to find that the actual strength of the Klan there was approximately the strength of the Christian Scientists in a convention of the American Medical Association. In alarm, he tried to shake off the lap dog. He succeeded at last, but not until the pursuer had given to the press the report that the Senator was the Klan's choice for the vice-presidency. Thus the Klan impresario performed his delegated task, and the senatorial back-slapper came home a ridiculous and ignominious figure. He had violated a sacred tenet of both his own and the Indiana code. An incompar-

able jiner, and a representative of a commonwealth of jiners, he had for once joined the wrong club. The National Convention had not been a Klavern of the Knights of the Knightie, nor even a Conclave of the Knights of Pythias. It had been a Convention of Rotary International.

The elevated white-jacket still meets with the Klergy around the council table, but the man who put God into the Klan is no longer present. Seeking recreation from the ardors of holy work, he was indicted and convicted for murder in connection with the death of a young woman whom, it was maintained by the prosecution, he drugged, took aboard a night train from Indianapolis to Hammond, and repeatedly assaulted in such a heinous manner that she took poison. But while he basked in a country jail, his soul went marching on. Was the imperial city of Indianapolis to select a mayor? Then a candidate's name would be whispered through the bars, and he would forthwith be nominated and elected. And was a new United States Senator to be selected to fill a vacancy caused by the death of an incumbent? Then a henchman of the imprisoned one would go to the throne and say who was to occupy the ancient seat of Beveridge.

Before the sacred one had to relinquish his godly services, he aided in winning control of the State Government for the Klan in the elections of 1924. The governor of the moment being too busy borrowing money on shady paper (a procedure which eventually landed him in a Federal penitentiary) to take much heed of the Klan's orders, the rival leaders determined to have an executive who would listen and obey. So they forgot for the while the tremendous question of who deserved the greater portion of each ten dollar membership fee, and picked an ambitious and obliging Republican politician of the Sunday-school variety. The best representatives of the old order—Marshall, Nicholson, former Governor Durbin, Democrats and Republicans alike, who had some regard for the former good name of their

State—did their utmost to stem the advance of the all righteous legions. But the Taggart machine, in which the old-timers placed so much dependence, had gone down the Ralston sewer in 1922, and it could not be recovered. A Knightie became governor.

Once in control of the State, the Klan performed exactly as had been predicted by everyone who had realized that it was essentially the political arm of the Methodist Church—and not of the actual Methodists alone, of course, but of all the evangelical sects. These crusaders wanted to outlaw parochial schools, it is true, but they desired more urgently to do something else—to persecute those die-hards who persisted in practicing the gentility and hospitality of a past era. That want was met when both houses of the Legislature passed, almost unanimously, the Wright Bone Dry Bill, some of the beautiful features of which I have already described. It is an admirable means for the expression of fanaticism. It is full of possibilities of blackmail. It is a perfect weapon for the venting of the perverted emotions of mean and depraved men. It is, in fine, the *summum bonum* of contemporary evangelical Protestantism and a complete synthesis of present-day Indianan ideas of the good, the true and the beautiful.

So much for the bill itself. What of the pious legislators who made it a law? With what sort of oblations did they commemorate their righteous action? Soon after their victory most of them joined in holding a party for Kin Hubbard, the creator of Abe Martin. And as Hubbard later informed Will Rogers, the liquor was varied and various but plentiful, and some of it was so bad that they "almost let it alone."

All this is, of course, not essentially a tragedy, but a comedy. And where else in These States is there a comedy at once so gaudy and obscene! A Commonwealth of Methodists solemnly choosing as leaders a bartender turned enforcement officer and a debauchee! Lifelong members of the Anti-Saloon League and the W. C. T. U.

riding to the polls in the high-priced limousines of Klan-licensed bootleggers! A legislative system devoted to framing laws that encourage fanatical persecution, sadistic revenge and blackmail, and a judicial system enthusiastically devoted to Law Enforcement!

V

The Civilized Minority

I will doubtless be accused of defaming the Commonwealth in which I was born and reared and where, though no longer a resident, I still spend the greater part of my time. In exculpation, I can only offer the excuse of the prodigal who returns to find the ancient name dishonored and the estate turned into a swine lot. If I feel at home anywhere in this world, it is on the gently undulating prairies of Northeastern Indiana. Times unnumbered, while wandering along foreign strands, my eyes have filled with tears at the thought of gorgeous sunsets and sweet smelling fields of Alsace, and my stomach emitted a bombardment of homesick growls at the mention of corn-on-the-cob and briny hog-meat. Further, I have absolutely no personal bias in the present matter. Most of the great men I have discussed I do not know, and do not want to know. If the people of Indiana like to be bossed by such fellows, I surely have no right to object. I have paid real money to see much worse shows, and nothing an Indiana politician can do will lessen my regard for the scenes of my childhood. My heart, if not my head, remains as faithful as it ever was in the far-off days of my nativity.

What is more to the point, the picture I am drawing must not be entirely devoid of light points, for there are gentle and cultured persons in the State, and in the last decade those persons have not only increased greatly in number, but have pulled themselves out of the mud of provincialism. Consider, for example, the improved literary taste of the intelligent Hoosier. In my

youth, his idea of being well read was to have fought his way through a shelf of the Edward Eggleston type of moral chronicles of Indiana frontier life. There was then, indeed, a cult of such local hero-worship, with Meredith Nicholson as high priest. Today that superstition is no more, and even Nicholson himself has recanted. The intelligent Indianan has finally realized that the Hoosiers who have ever contributed anything of genuine merit to the national letters are nearly all alive and kicking, and can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

But while the civilized minority has been growing-of-age, the mob has been getting out of hand. The minority is at last aware of the fact, but it is completely at a loss to know what to do. What it lacks chiefly is, I believe, what the intelligent minority lacks in every State in the great open spaces of the South and Middle-west, namely, courage. It is too prone to rely upon the soft words of politicians, and not eager enough to give battle fearlessly and without quarter. It should have taken account of an incident that happened some two years ago at Indianapolis. The Rainbow Division Veterans' Association of twenty-six States was holding a convention, and it was announced that the Rev. Fr. Patrick Duffy, of the Sixty-ninth Regiment of Infantry and senior chaplain of the division, would address the convention and hold a memorial service to those who lost their lives in the battle of Champagne. Immediately the Klan, which had just naturalized its five hundred thousandth convert, sent a committee to the assembled veterans to protest against Father Duffy's presence as highly unpatriotic, un-American, and so forth. If the civilized and harassed Hoosiers would ponder the answer given to the noble Knights, they might discover in what sort of tactics lies their only way of liberation:

You go to hell! Father Duffy was in the Rainbow and this division knew no question of creed! He is one of our buddies and he is going to speak, and if you people don't like it you can get off the stage!

VI

Rag Papers

Once the minority is organized for battle, its first attack will undoubtedly be directed against the degraded journalism of the State. As everywhere else, the newspapers of the larger towns have obliterated most of the meritorious country journals and forced those remaining to become insipid imitations of the urban standard. That standard is nowhere more apparent than in the cases of the two chief dailies of Indianapolis: the morning *Star* and the evening *News*. The *Star*, a member of the Shaffer string of Midwestern dailies, is a fatuous party sheet which devotes most of its editorial page to anointing the Republican party with goose grease and the rest to banal moralizing. Its intellectual calibre was demonstrated recently when it attempted to justify the violation of personal liberty inherent in Prohibition by pointing to the municipal custom of establishing building restrictions! The *News*, though paraded for many years under the ostensible ownership of one of its editors, was actually the property of the late Charles W. Fairbanks, and is now owned by some of his heirs. It is almost as cheaply partisan as the *Star*, and divides its time between advocating the Dawes senatorial gag and hymning the Wilsonian idealism.

There are possibly men on the editorial pages of both these papers who are capable of creditable work. But under the policy of concurring in the present Ku Klux Kultur their talents are practically impotent. For the complete domination of that Kultur the two papers are partly to blame, for they have either aided or acquiesced in it, and even now they both persist in avoiding any forthright discussion of political realities in the State. For that one must go to occasional editorials and news items in the Indianapolis *Times*, a Scripps-Howard paper, edited by the intelligent and daring Felix F. Bruner, and to the excellent weekly letters of Robert G.

Tucker, in the Sunday Cincinnati *Enquirer* and the Sunday Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette*. The latter paper, though quite as partisan as the Indianapolis journals, has one of the few comparatively free editorial pages in the State.

The first difficulty that must be overcome by the intelligent minority of Hoosiers before they can organize a revolt of any promise is the lack of leadership. Marshall is in the Presbyterian heaven. Taggart, though supposedly a wet and opposed to the whole present scheme of things in Indiana, is much too ready to compromise ever to obtain a great following. Secluded in the cathartic resort in the Southern hills, he entertains Al Smith one day and the up-lifters the next. Beveridge? Perhaps he might be useful, and, again, perhaps not. Unfortunately, he has done what he always does when he knows he is licked. Beaten to a frazzle by the Klan in 1922, two years later he campaigned the State from end to end for the Klan ticket. His action was doubtless only one of the political conventionalities to which American politicians of all sorts are subject, but to most of the electorate it must have appeared an ignominious *volte face*—the simon pure statesman donning a nightshirt and climbing into bed with those who had knifed him.

What the civilized Indianan should do before he plans any strategic offensive is to arrive at a clear realization of exactly what he is facing. What is the Klan's authentic *raison d'être*? And what is the explanation of its unusual triumph in Indiana? All who ponder these questions honestly must, I believe, arrive at the same answers. The Klan in Indiana, as everywhere else in this great land of Christian brotherhood, is merely one device for expressing the envy and hatred of the rustic toward the sinful and happy inhabitant of the city. It is in the city that all the objects of the Klan's hatred are centered—Catholicism, Juda-

ism, anti-Prohibition sentiment, all learning and culture. The Klan has been tremendously successful in Indiana simply because, as already stated, that State is—far more than any of its neighbors, and even more than any of the so-called farming States of the West and Northwest—the perfect bucolic commonwealth.

But if the noble husbandman has been more adept in organizing in Indiana than elsewhere, that fact is only a harbinger of what is likely to happen eventually in every imperial commonwealth west of the Alleghanies. The present Klan will, no doubt, die from the ineradicable hoggishness of its leaders, but there will always be new leaders ready to capitalize the emotions it has fanned to white heat. The embattled peasant has at last leaped the barricades and is charging the citadels of civilization. Poised majestically upon the dunghills, his divinely inspired commanders shout orders and vent their barbarous will-to-power. Already the bastions have toppled from the bombardment. They have written their perverted moral code into the fundamental law of the land, and there it stands—a victorious assault upon the immemorial customs of gentlemen.

Now the general staff turns its forces upon the parapets, and attempts to destroy the accumulated learning of the ages. The death of Bryan, the Fundamentalists Pope who was destined to lead on to such a sacred end, has caused a temporary lull in the fighting. But a new occupant for the Evangelical Vatican will be found, and the battle will be resumed. How, finally, will it end? Who, after observing the saddling of Prohibition upon an unwilling public, is so naïve as to imagine any limit to the triumphal march of the liberated yokel? In Indiana he has already caused the scrapping of every common law precedent for the protection of the individual that has been established since the Conference of Runnymede.